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Consular Information Sheet

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Afghanistan

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COUNTRY DESCRIPTION: Afghanistan faces daunting challenges - recovering from over two decades of civil strife, dealing with years of severe drought, and rebuilding a shattered infrastructure. Meanwhile, Operation Enduring Freedom continues. The Emergency Loya Jirga, a national assembly held in June 2002, established the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS: A passport is required. The Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan requires American citizens to obtain a visa for entry into the country. Information on entry requirements can be obtained from [the Embassy of Afghanistan](#) located at 2341 Wyoming Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008, phone no. 202-483-6410, fax no. 202-483-6488, website: www.afghanistanembassy.org.

In an effort to prevent international child abduction, many governments have initiated procedures at entry/exit points. These often include requiring documentary evidence of relationship and permission for the child's travel from the parent(s) or legal guardian not present. Having such documentation on hand, even if not required, may facilitate entry/departure.

DUAL NATIONALITY: In addition to being subject to all Afghan laws affecting U.S. citizens, dual nationals may also be subject to other laws that impose special obligations on Afghan citizens, including military service. For additional information, see the Consular Affairs home page on the Internet at <http://travel.state.gov> for our [Dual Nationality flyer](#).

SECURITY AND SAFETY: The latest Travel Warning for Afghanistan states clearly that the security situation remains critical for American citizens. There are remnants of the former Taliban regime and the terrorist al-Qaida network in various parts of Afghanistan. There is a continuing threat of terrorist actions, including attacks using vehicular or other bombs. The country faces a difficult period in the near term, and American citizens could be targeted or placed at risk by unpredictable local events. There is also a real danger from the presence of millions of unexploded land mines and other ordnance. The Afghan government has lifted their curfew in Kabul; however, U.S. Embassy in Kabul continues to observe a curfew.

Afghan-Americans returning to Afghanistan to recover property have become involved in complicated disputes and, even given favorable court proceedings, often face retaliatory actions including threats of kidnapping for ransom.

CRIME: A large portion of the Afghan population is unemployed and displaced from their traditional places of residence, and the food situation is of critical concern throughout Afghanistan. Basic services are rudimentary or not existent. These factors may directly contribute to crime and lawlessness. Diplomats and international relief workers have reported incidents of highway robbery and household burglaries. Any American citizen who enters Afghanistan should remain vigilant for possible banditry, including attacks with violence.

The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. (Currently, the U.S. Embassy in Kabul is not issuing passports and cannot replace a lost passport.) The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

U.S. citizens may refer to the Department of State's pamphlet, [A Safe Trip Abroad](#), for ways to promote a trouble-free journey. The pamphlet is available by mail from the Superintendent of Documents, [U.S. Government Printing Office](#), Washington, D.C. 20402, via the Internet at http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs, or via the Bureau of Consular Affairs home page at <http://travel.state.gov>.

MEDICAL FACILITIES: Well-equipped medical facilities are few and far between throughout Afghanistan. European and American medicines are generally unavailable, and there is a shortage of basic medical supplies. Basic medicines manufactured in Iran, Pakistan and India are available. Travelers will not be able to find Western-trained medical personnel in most parts of the country. Hospitals throughout the country can provide only the most-limited services. There are also some international aid groups temporarily providing basic medical assistance in various cities and villages. For any medical treatment, payment is required in advance. Commercial medical evacuation capability from within Afghanistan is limited.

MEDICAL INSURANCE: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. U.S. medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Further, U.S. Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States. However, many travel agents and private companies offer insurance plans that will cover health care expenses incurred overseas including emergency services such as medical evacuations.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the U.S. may cost in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses you incur. Some insurance policies also include coverage for psychiatric treatment and for disposition of remains in the event of death.

Useful information on medical emergencies abroad, including overseas insurance programs, is provided in the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs brochure, [Medical Information for Americans Traveling Abroad](#), available via the Bureau of Consular Affairs home page or autofax: (202) 647-3000.

OTHER HEALTH INFORMATION: Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from [the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)'s hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or via the CDC's Internet site at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult [the World Health Organization](#)'s website at <http://www.who.int/en>. [Further health information for travelers](#) is available at <http://www.who.int/ith>.

TRAFFIC SAFETY AND ROAD CONDITIONS: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Afghanistan is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Safety of Public Transportation: Poor
 Urban Road Conditions/Maintenance: Poor
 Rural Road Conditions/Maintenance: Poor
 Availability of Roadside Assistance: Poor

All traffic is in danger of land mines that have been randomly planted on and near roadways. An estimated 5-7 million landmines and large quantities of unexploded ordnance are scattered throughout the countryside and alongside roads, posing a danger to travelers. Robbery and crime are also prevalent on highways outside of Kabul. The transportation system in Afghanistan is marginal. Vehicles are poorly maintained and often overloaded; traffic laws are not enforced; drivers are erratic. Vehicular traffic is chaotic and must contend with numerous pedestrians and animals. Many urban streets have large potholes and are not well lit. Rural roads often are not paved.

[For additional general information about road safety](#), including links to foreign government sites, see the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs home page at http://travel.state.gov/road_safety.html.

AVIATION SAFETY OVERSIGHT: A few commercial airlines offer service to Afghanistan.

As there is no direct commercial air service by local carriers at present, or economic authority to operate such service, between the U.S. and Afghanistan, [the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration](#) (FAA) has not assessed Afghanistan's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with international aviation safety standards. For further information, travelers may contact the Department of Transportation within the U.S. at 1-800-322-7873, or visit the FAA's Internet website at <http://www.intl.faa.gov>.

The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) separately assesses some foreign air carriers for suitability as official providers of air services. For information regarding the DOD policy on specific carriers, travelers may contact DOD at (618) 229-4801.

CUSTOM REGULATIONS: Afghan customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Afghanistan of items such as firearms, alcoholic beverages, religious materials, antiquities, medications, and printed materials. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Afghanistan in Washington or one of Afghanistan's other diplomatic missions for specific information regarding customs requirements.

CRIMINAL PENALTIES: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Afghanistan's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Afghanistan are strict and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines. Proselytizing remains illegal and violators will be punished.

CONSULAR ACCESS: U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passports with them at all times, so that, if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and U.S. citizenship are readily available. As stated in the Travel Warning for Afghanistan, consular assistance for American citizens in Afghanistan is limited.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: Because of the poor infrastructure in Afghanistan, access to banking facilities is extremely limited and unreliable. Afghanistan's economy operates on a "cash-only" basis for most transactions. Credit card transactions are not operable. International bank transfers are not available. No ATM machines exist.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS: International communications are difficult. Local telephone networks do not operate reliably. Many rely on satellite telephone communications even to make local calls. There is cellular phone service available locally. Injured or distressed foreigners could face long delays before being able to communicate their needs to colleagues or family outside Afghanistan. Internet access through local service providers is limited.

CHILDREN'S ISSUES: [For information on international adoption of children and international parental child abduction](http://travel.state.gov/children's_issues.html), please refer to our Internet site at http://travel.state.gov/children's_issues.html or telephone 1-888-407-4747.

REGISTRATION/EMBASSY LOCATION: The Embassy is located at Great Masood Road between Radio Afghanistan and the Ministry of Public Health, Kabul. It can provide no passport or visa services, but does perform emergency and routine citizens services. U.S. citizens who travel to or reside in Afghanistan are encouraged to register at the consular section of the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, phone numbers: (93-2) 290002, 290005, 290154; INMARSAT line, tel 00 [872](761)837-927; fax: 00[873](76) 183-7374, and obtain updated information on travel and security within Afghanistan. [The U.S. Embassy in Kabul web site](http://usembassy.state.gov/afghanistan/) can be accessed at <http://usembassy.state.gov/afghanistan/>

This replaces the Consular Information Sheet for Afghanistan dated February 28, 2002, to update the Country Description, Entry Requirements, Security and Safety, Medical Facilities, Medical Insurance, Other Health Information, Aviation Safety Oversight, Telecommunications, and Registration/Embassy Information. Please also refer to the separate Travel Warning for Afghanistan and the Worldwide Caution Public Announcement.

Updated information on travel and security in Afghanistan may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States or 1-317-472-2328 from overseas. For additional information, consult the Department of State's [Consular Information Sheet for Afghanistan](#) and the [Worldwide Caution Public Announcement](#), on the Department's internet website at <http://travel.state.gov>.